



Readings, Reflection & Prayers
Second Sunday after Trinity
13 June 2021



www.stjohnsharpenden.org.uk

Contents

Readings for this Sunday	p. 2
Reflection	p. 3-5
Prayers	p. 5-6
Parish Prayers	p. 6-7

Readings for this Sunday

These are the readings for this Sunday which you may like to read in your bibles at home.

Ezekiel 17.22-24

2 Corinthians 5.6-17

Mark 4.26-34

The Parable of the Growing Seed

He also said, 'The kingdom of God is as if someone would scatter seed on the ground, and would sleep and rise night and day, and the seed would sprout and grow, he does not know how. The earth produces of itself, first the stalk, then the head, then the full grain in the head. But when the grain is ripe, at once he goes in with his sickle, because the harvest has come.'

The Parable of the Mustard Seed

He also said, 'With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable will we use for it? It is like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth; yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes the greatest of all shrubs, and puts forth large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade.'

The Use of Parables

With many such parables he spoke the word to them, as they were able to hear it; he did not speak to them except in parables, but he explained everything in private to his disciples.

Reflection from David Nye

I hadn't realised until I looked it up, that there are no less than 39 parables in the New Testament, 39 stories that Jesus told to answer a question or to make a point.

Many of the parables that Jesus told were set in the context of the land or the sea or the home: in other words, places where his listeners would feel at home. Many were fishermen or farmers. If we were asked to retell some of these parables today, I guess we would set them in the context of a supermarket or a football match or a school or somewhere else that people could relate to.

Today's reading from St Mark's gospel includes the parable about the mustard seed.

I have never seen a mustard seed but I think they are incredibly small. Yet, says Jesus, when you plant this seed, it has the potential to grow into the greatest of all shrubs. In fact, if you read the version of this parable as recalled by Luke, he refers not to a shrub but to a tree so large that birds came and made nests in its branches. The obvious point is that from small beginnings, greatness can unfold: just as an acorn can become a huge and mighty oak tree.

Those of you who are gardeners will know that you never quite know what is going to happen when you sow your seeds. We know that nothing should surprise us.

So one interpretation of this parable is all about small beginnings and not being daunted if nothing much seems to be happening: rather like planting your seeds and waiting patiently for something to appear.

In the same way, trying to live our lives as Christians will have set backs and false starts but we shouldn't give up because with God's grace, little by little, our efforts will bear fruit. It's about us continuing to make what effort we can because eventually something mighty will happen.

However, if you study this parable more closely, it seems to be about something rather surprising and much more important: something about God rather than about us. If the mustard seed really does grow into the greatest of all shrubs, then something rather surprising is going on and if the

seed really does grow into a tree, well that is really amazingly and hard to believe.

Jesus says that is what God and the kingdom is like: be prepared for a big surprise, be prepared for something that we did not believe would happen because his kingdom is about something that we can hardly imagine. It's like comparing the death of Jesus, to his rising to new life. Something dramatic, something beyond our understanding, something that's never happened before is going to happen. That's what God and his kingdom is like: something we cannot fully understand, something that is unknowable and unbelievable.

If that's true, then there is really no way that we can hope to have even a partial understanding of the greatness, the majesty, the love of God and what he plans for us after this earthly life, beyond the picture given to us by Jesus. Of course, Jesus assures us that his kingdom will be beyond our wildest dreams, that there will be peace and love and none of the ills of this world. Quite how wonderful that will be, quite how great and all loving it will be, we just cannot begin to comprehend.

The great danger is that we put God in a little box and let him out on Sundays and on other special occasions when we choose to pray to him, worship him and glorify him. And that's great as a start but we need to realise that God will not be confined as we might want but he is with us and beside us all the time.

The Bishop of Liverpool once said that we had become a nation drowning in affluence and inequality and that our task as Christians was to promote the Kingdom of God. It is true, that hard as we try, we can sometimes lose our way, spiritually speaking, we are prone to believe that we can get by without God's help, that we are self-sufficient and we pretend that actually we can lead perfectly normal and happy lives without involving God.

Yet we know that it is only God who can give meaning to our lives, that it is only God who can rescue us when we have taken the wrong path, only God who will truly forgive us for the wrong we have done and only God who promises that after this life there is something infinitely better to come.

If instead, we rely on God for all that we do: if we include God in all that we do: if we ask God to keep us and our loved ones in his safety, then when we

do have those times of doubt and despair, those times when we feel lost and abandoned, those times when nothing seems to be going well, those times when we have lost a loved one, then we will all the better know his love, know the arms that support and console and comfort us and that whilst we may lose our way, he will never stop loving us nor desert us. That's a vision of the greatness of God that we should never underestimate and certainly never forget.

It's one of the shortest parables but the story of the mustard seed in reminding us of the greatness of God, might be more important than all the others.

Prayers

Collect for this Sunday

Faithful Creator,
whose mercy never fails:
deepen our faithfulness to you
and to your living Word,
Jesus Christ our Lord.

God our heavenly Father, we thank you for the abundance of your creation here on earth. From the smallest of seeds to the mightiest of living creatures. May our faith grow in Union to increase your kingdom as your will to praise and worship you...

Lord in your mercy,
Hear our prayer

God the Son, Jesus thank you that have given us the connection with our Heavenly Father. May we follow your example to humbly love one another for his glory to shine through us. To care, serve and heal all nations and people, especially those who are poor in spirit, as theirs is the kingdom of heaven...

Lord in your mercy,
Hear our prayer

God the Holy Spirit, give us the power for your will to be done on earth as in heaven, that we might help to bring about the things of heaven here on earth.

As the kingdom of God heaven is big and near to all who believe. May we store up our treasures in heaven. We thank you for the Trinity, father, son and holy spirit working as one. So we can work together for your purpose...
Lord in your mercy,
Hear our prayer.

As our saviour taught us, so we pray
Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and for ever. Amen

Parish Prayers for the week ahead

In the Anglican Cycle of Prayer:

Sunday	The Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion)
Monday	The Diocese of Chandigarh – The (united) Church of North India
Tuesday	The Diocese of Chelmsford – The Church of England
Wednesday	The Diocese of Chester – The Church of England
Thursday	The Diocese of Chhattisgarh – The (united) Church of North India
Friday	The Diocese of Chicago – The Episcopal Church
Saturday	The Diocese of Chichester – The Church of England

In our Diocesan Cycle of Prayer:

Sunday	Parish of Turnford (Deanery of Cheshunt)
Monday	Parish of Waltham Cross, Christ Church (Deanery of Cheshunt)
Tuesday	Parish of Billington (Deanery of Dunstable)
Wednesday	Parish of Chalgrave (Deanery of Dunstable)
Thursday	Parish of Dunstable (Deanery of Dunstable)
Friday	Parish of Eaton Bray with Edlesborough (Deanery of Dunstable)
Saturday	Alban Pilgrimage

For the homes and families in:

Sunday	Piggottshill Lane
Monday	Pipers Avenue, Poynings Close
Tuesday	Prospect Lane, Queens Road
Wednesday	Ranleigh Walk, Ravenscroft
Thursday	Redbourn Lane, Rowan Way
Friday	St John's Road, St Michael's Close
Saturday	St Paul's Close, Sandhurst Court

The Sick:

Claire, Sue, Christine, Hermione, Karen, Chris and all whose names are entered on our St Luke's Cell Prayer List.

On their year's mind:

Constance Cruickshank, Percy Bradbury, Albert Elliott, Michael Kaye, Audrey Colegate, Stephen Bryan, Philip Haig, Violet Turnbull, Kenneth Tyler, James Crabtree

A reminder... of this phone service:

Daily Hope – dial 0800 804 8044 for prayer, reflection, music and worship services from the Church of England. A weekly service is available from 9 am every Sunday.

Church at home:

We are delighted to produce each week these printed papers. If you would prefer not to receive these papers each week, please let Julie in the parish office know. If you are aware of others in the parish who would also value the opportunity to worship at home in this way, do please contact a member of the Ministry team or Julie (Parish Office Tel: 01582 712776).